

COME OUT OF THE SBC

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The following is the conclusion of an article entitled "SBC Conservative 'Take-over' Not a 'Make-over'" which appeared in the Sword of the Lord (P.O. Box 1099, Murfreesboro, TN 37133), December 13, 1996. The author is Sword Editor Shelton Smith. An enlarged edition of the article is scheduled to appear in book form this month (call 800 247-9673 for information)

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Based on the news items we have included in this article (and we could have included dozens of others), it is our observation and conclusion that the conservatives in the SBC are fighting a losing battle. After almost two decades of their leadership, the cleanup of the SBC still has a long, long way to go. Much of the denominational machinery is still dominated by the moderates (liberals). The election of a conservative SBC president sounds reassuring to the rank and file, but in reality it accomplishes very little.

Although the fight within the SBC has been a fierce one, the ground gained has been limited. The state papers are mostly run by moderates (liberals). The SBC colleges are all dominated by liberals. The state conventions are still overwhelmingly under the control of the moderates (liberals).

The six SBC seminaries of the Baptist Sunday School Board have been "recovered" by the conservatives, but even there the surface may not fully represent the substance of the matter. Sources within the SBC confide to us that there are still moderates (liberals) on the faculty at most of the seminaries. The conservative "recovery" has not been a complete one. Some liberals have resigned, but others have tenure and are not about to vacate their spots.

The SBC colleges are almost without exception dominated by the moderates. One leading SBC conservative was quoted (November 1996) as saying, "Not a single college is left. We've lost every last one of them."

The state convention news magazines (the official media organs within the SBC) are controlled mostly by the moderate (liberal) faction. Exceptions may be noted, but they are few, very few.

The Foreign Mission Board (SBC) has a conservative director now, but he was appointed under a cloud about his charismatic views. Our research indicates there are still many career SBC missionaries who were trained in the liberal schools. Most of them reflect in large measure the training they received.

The Home Mission Board (SBC) has typically been "more conservative" than some of the other agencies of the Convention, but recent years have brought a heavy ecumenical emphasis.

The Christian Life Commission (SBC) is the agency addressing social issues. Once a major voice of the SBC liberals, it now is staffed and directed by the conservatives.

The Women's Missionary Union, an auxiliary of the SBC, operates with almost no supervision from the Convention leadership. It is dominated by the liberals and has exhibited a defiant attitude toward the conservatives in recent times.

The Brotherhood, the SBC Men's Department, has been a minor player for years. They now are heavily involved in world hunger causes and have recently been promoting the ecumenical Promise Keepers in a big way.

The state convention meetings in November 1996, were like powder kegs waiting to explode, and some of them did. The liberals are still there in strength. The conservatives are waging a battle, but the tide seems to be turning against them in several states. People are expressing weariness over the constant warfare. As the conservatives grow weary, the liberals will take up the slack.

We have often noted the concerns about the liberals, but now we find a good bit of reason (as noted in the news items) to be concerned about the conservatives. The philosophy and practices of the conservatives seem to be weak doctrinally and tolerant of compromise.

The position of some of the leading SBC conservatives is of great concern, and we believe is now tragically diluting their cause and dooming it to failure.

Consequently, we believe the conservative "take-over" is a false hope. ...

When we compromise the truth, we dishonor Jesus. When we dismiss doctrine as unessential or insignificant, we dishonor Jesus. When we let the liberals fund their payroll from the church offering plate, we dishonor Jesus. When we take a position of inclusiveness in respect to doctrine, we dishonor Jesus. When we bring a wide range of theological views to the pulpit in our care, we dishonor Jesus.

Does not the blessed Word of God make a clarion call for us to stand up and to speak up? Is it not clear that we should raise these issues and challenge good people to follow these biblical mandates?

Why will the conservative leadership in the SBC not make a strong, sweeping, scriptural, uncompromising stand? It seems they may too be so attuned to the spirit of ecumenism and so compromised by the spirit of accommodation that they cannot deal forcefully with the spirit of error in their midst.

STAYING IN IS NOT SOLID GROUND

There is a mentality among the conservatives in the SBC that gives verbal assent to the right position but yet continues to provide church money to the denominational causes which betray those positions.

I hear them say, "Listen, we're still in the SBC, but we love God, we believe the Bible, we are winning souls, and we're serving God." Now, dear friend, I believe that. I never doubted it for a moment. I thank God for what you're doing that's right, but that doesn't excuse the continued participation in the corrupt denominational scene.

"Oh, but we're not for that; we're against the liberalism and the ecumenism, etc., too." But, precious friend, if you or your church gives money through the SBC Cooperative Program, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, or the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, you are helping to finance the very things you say you oppose.

You really can't "stay in" the SBC without being a partner to the compromise and the corruption which have been so long present there. It's not very impressive to say, "I love the Lord, and I believe the Bible," but yet defend your support of liberals, ecumenicists and other such things simply because "it's Southern Baptist."

Such loyalty is ludicrous! It is not the stand we believe Christ-honoring, God-fearing servants of God should take.

Our loyalties should be first, last and always to Christ and the Bible. We stand with other men as long as they stand with Christ and the Bible; but if they depart from the Faith, we should hold a steady course with deep and unabated loyalty based on solid, scriptural foundations. We should not continue funding their foolishness or identifying ourselves with them.

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Timothy 4:2-5).

SWORD EDITOR MAKES APPEAL

The news items show a very clear picture of the Southern Baptist Convention as it is today. Conservatives are in leadership [on the national level], but they still have not purged the liberals from the denominational payroll. Indications are that inclusivism has been adopted even by some of the key conservative leaders.

The issue is not just over the liberals, but now we also have reason to believe the conservatives do not hold strong views in some vital areas. [O Timothy Editor: Southern Baptist conservative leaders are Neo-Evangelical compromisers at best.]

Therefore, we urge the folks who love the Lord and who hold to the authenticity and the authority of the Bible to disengage themselves from the compromise and the corruption so prevalent within the SBC.

We recommend churches stop the funding of the SBC Cooperative Program, the Lottie Moon Offering, and the Annie Armstrong Offering.

We recommend pastors go ahead and make a clean break and withdraw from the SBC. The battle will continue for awhile yet, and we believe the conservatives are ultimately going to lose. [O Timothy Editor: Even if the conservative Southern Baptist leaders achieve all of their stated goals, they will fall far short of what the Bible demands of the churches. They have never said their goal is to purge the convention of all unbelief and false teaching and error and false practice, but anything less is to disobey the Word of God. To my knowledge, not one man or woman who questions the inerrancy of the Bible has been disciplined by Southern Baptist churches. If this has happened, it has been an odd, isolated case. The Bible does not approach heresy in the context of denominational structures, because the Apostles did not establish any denominational structures. The Bible approaches heresy in the context of the New Testament assembly. Heretics and false teachers are not to be supported and fellowshiped with; they are to be disciplined by the churches and put away from the assemblies so they will not be allowed to contaminate God's people by their heresies (Romans 16:17,18; 2 Timothy 2:16-21; Titus 3:10,11). I have never heard the conservative Southern Baptist leaders call for this approach to the problem of liberalism in the SBC, but anything less than this is disobedience to God.]

Some are afraid that they have "no place to go" if they exit the Convention. Listen, dear friends, there is "life after the Convention," and it's wonderful. Some have affectionately called it "the fraternity of the free."

Many of us did come out in past years, and others are doing so even now. I commend it to you as well.

The SBC is a doomed cause. Failure by the conservatives is inevitable (in my judgment). Why spend your life's blood fighting a losing battle? [O Timothy Editor: Why spend your life's blood fighting a battle which does not go all the way in obeying the Word of God?]

The world is lost, dying and on its way to Hell, and we should give our best energies to winning souls, building good churches and growing strong Christians.

So "come on out," and let's give our best to the Lord's work every day we live.

Amen! Amen! Amen!

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